Keeping love alive in an age of distraction

By Edward M. Hallowell, M.D. and Sue George Hallowell, LICSW

We live in a high-velocity world that has radically changed from just a generation ago. Patterns of how people get and stay close are shifting, right along with the economy, the political balance of power and the speed of communication.

Never before has it been so easy to stay in touch with so many people electronically. But maintaining genuine human closeness has become more difficult. The people around us seem short-tempered, and we feel constantly distracted, overloaded and worried.

Emotional closeness requires attention

In today’s environment, love and support from a spouse or mate are more critical than ever. But emotional closeness, the kind of intimacy we would like to share—the kind that keeps a close relationship alive and thriving—requires continuous attention. And our ability to pay attention without being interrupted has all but vanished since the advent of new media technologies. The force of distraction now rules.

For example, most of us used to check our mail when it arrived, typically once or twice a day. Now some law of nature makes an unopened message irresistible. We check electronic devices even when we know it’s unlikely we will find anything that could not wait, say, another 15 minutes while we complete a conversation or a thought.

The brainwork of love needs time

When continuous partial attention becomes the norm, our brainwork suffers. We know how this works in business, science, art—anything that requires concentration. But it is just as damaging in love. Love is brainwork. Without sustained attention, love loses its luster.

The new challenge in the field of intimate relationships is to find time for love: time to develop love, convey love, speak love, even make love. The longer love goes unshared...
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and unexpressed, the less intense it becomes. The more the expression of our love gets frustrated, the less motivated we are to address it. But if we don’t protect the time we devote to love, we can lose it. Intimacy requires more than sound bites. It needs uninterrupted time, undivided attention and a commitment to forgo diversions. Here are some ways to attack the force of distraction in your life:

■ Turn it off! That should be one of the “Ten Commandments” of modern relationships. Smart phone, computer, iPad, iPod, BlackBerry, TV. The instant you turn them off, distraction and overload will subside. Granted, this may be difficult, but we can do it. Learning when and how to restrict our use of electronic devices is like learning how to control our food or alcohol intake.

■ Cut back on screensucking, those hours spent online playing games, surfing the Net, sending and receiving silly email. This can be a sinkhole that leaves you with too little time left to accomplish what you truly need to do.

■ Learn to say “no” or “let me get back to you on that.” Say it to good people, good ideas and good projects. Cut out the obligations and activities that drain you. And when you eliminate something, do not immediately replace it with something (or somebody) else.

■ Do it “person to person.” Let people know if they want to have a meaningful conversation with you, it’s best done in person. Don’t let electronic moments replace time spent face to face.

■ Resist the urge to always be doing something—reading something, watching something or talking into something. We ourselves invite the force of distraction, and then we have no time left for thinking.

■ Make good use of your “morning burst.” Of course, it may not happen in the morning. It’s that time of day when you feel the freshest. Don’t squander it on email or TV: talk to your mate, play with your kids, work on an important project.

■ Exercise. Regular physical exercise is good for your body and great for your mind. When you exercise, your body puts out chemicals that act as antidepressants, antianxiety agents, anti-stressors, mind-focusers and mood enhancers.

Staying connected
Loving connection is the most powerful force we humans can create to ease the pain of life and generate joy. We create “connect- edness” with friends, neighbors, pets, at work, outdoors with nature and, most notably, with a spouse or mate. The more places we tap into connectedness, the happier, healthier, better balanced and more fulfilled we will be.

Keeping love alive and a relationship intact is possible even though our culture of distraction makes it difficult to achieve. Without noticing it, we find ourselves rushing—even when there’s no need to. But to love and be loving, we need to pause and attend to the other person.

For love to sustain us, we must linger over it and savor it. We must slow down and open up enough to create a space that welcomes simple, kind words.

Celebrate together
This space should also make it possible to play, have fun and celebrate together. New research shows that even more important than being there for your partner when times are tough is being there when times are good.

The study found that being excited and happy when your partner brings home good news was a better predictor of the strength of a relationship than being sympathetic when bad news hits.◆

—Adapted from the authors’ book “Married to Distraction” (Ballantine Books). See We Recommend on page 8.

21 ways to make a good relationship great

1. Create a shared dream and draw energy and hope from it.

2. Build boundaries to avoid interruptions. Protect your time for each other.

3. The key to romance is attention. Nothing is more romantic than giving someone undivided, sustained attention.

4. Develop empathy and understanding by asking questions and listening to answers. This will build a stronger connection.

5. Play is the action of love. Let yourselves go-together. Find new ways to play.

6. Don’t take your mate for granted. Try to see him or her with fresh eyes daily.

7. Know what your mate wants and loves, and communicate what you want and love.

8. Don’t assume that your partner can see, hear, feel or process what is plainly clear to you. Say what you need rather than waiting for your mate to guess.

9. Don’t make psychiatric diagnoses such as “narcissist,” “passive-aggressive” or “OCD.” Describe, don’t diagnose.

10. Avoid moral diagnososes too. Replace “you’re bad” with understanding.

11. When you feel hurt, ask yourself, “What do I want this pain to turn into?” Rise above the human tendency to return pain with pain.

12. If a fight is about to escalate, ask yourself, “Is this worth it?”

13. Your effort to be right may mean making the other person wrong, which could be humiliating. In marriage, being right is far less important than being kind.

14. Practice preventive maintenance. Say what you appreciate about your mate every day. Have special times together—like walking the dog, going to Starbucks.

15. Never let your spouse or partner see you roll your eyes. Contempt breeds contempt.

16. Learn to control your anger. Make it like a sneeze: brief, clearing the air, forgotten.

17. Fight fair. It’s the only common trait we’ve found between long-married friends.

18. In a disagreement, step out of your normal role and try to look at yourself from the outside in.

19. Learn to forgive. It doesn’t mean condoning a bad deed. It just means not carrying anger around for a long time.

20. Create a relationship process, a set of habits, rituals, traditions and daily practices that keep you in touch with each other.

21. Find a passion you can both enjoy.

—E.M.H., S.G.H.
Time to fight fast-food ads aimed at kids

Children are bombarded with ads and tie-ins with movies and games to get them to eat junk food and certain fast-food meals. I want my kids to eat healthy and not be taken in by sophisticated advertising techniques. Any suggestions?

—H.S., Croton, NY

You’ve hit on a big issue. The U.S. beverage industry alone spends $3 billion a year on marketing directly to kids. Junk food advertisers pay heavily to insert references and images of their products into TV shows, movies and online games popular with children. It’s called “product placement” and they do it because it works.

These days American children consume more than a third of their daily calories from soft drinks, sweets, salty snacks and fast food. As they associate pleasure with unhealthy food, they develop habits that become hard to break—and we’re all aware of the rising rates of childhood obesity.

CommonSenseMedia.org has some good suggestions that may not be easy but they’re still doable: (a) limit young children’s TV viewing, (b) have kids watch commercial-free television or parent-approved DVDs as much as possible, and (c) keep TV sets out of kids’ bedrooms.

As children get older, you can help them spot the placement of junk foods on TV and online, notice products that are used as props or part of a storyline, and start a conversation about how these messages encourage kids to eat unhealthy foods. Also, check out the websites your children are viewing. Some are just giant ads.

One of the best things you can do is to have family dinner together every day. We are still role models for our children—and, if we feed them right and set an example for healthy eating, chances are good they will follow it.

For more suggestions, check out the website campaignforcommercialfreechildhood.org.

New study finds dads outwork other men

 Fathers with children at home work longer hours than men who have no kids, according to new research from the Families and Work Institute in New York.

The dads in the study worked, on average, 47 hours a week—three hours more than the men in the study who either did not have children or did not live with them or whose kids were 18 and older. The dads in the study with younger children worked even longer hours: on average, 50 or more a week.

“Men are working longer to bring in more money for their families,” says Ellen Galinsky, president of the Institute and executive editor of this newsletter.

“In open-ended questions, their answers were about earning more money. I think the breadwinner image is a part of it, particularly for men with children.”

Galinsky presented the report at the International Conference of Work and Family in Barcelona.

The findings are based on responses from 1,298 employed men who live with at least one family member such as a spouse or partner, a child or other relative. Of the participants, 75 percent have a spouse or partner who also works outside the home, and 49 percent have a child under 18 living at home.

The new research is part of the National Study of the Changing Workforce, which surveyed 3,500 employed people in 2008 and found that men are more conflicted over work-life balance now than in recent years.

The study focused on why men are experiencing increased conflict and seems to dispel any notions that dads duck out of work for child-related issues and do not pull their weight.

“For many years, there was a strong focus on women and their work-family conflict,” says Galinsky. “This study shows it’s not just women who experience it—men do too.”

Commenting on the new research in USA Today, Kathleen Christensen, director of the Workplace, Workforce and Working Families Program at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, says she’s not surprised that dads are working longer hours: “They feel a very deep and abiding responsibility to take care of their families. The father’s identity as breadwinner is so ingrained in who they are.”
Why do I need to know about palliative care?

Does your older relative suffer from pain or symptoms due to any illness, including arthritis? Does she experience physical or emotional pain that’s not under control? Does he need help understanding his situation and coordinating proper care?

Many people define palliative care as an end-of-life measure that is part of hospice care. But it’s not. It is medical care to relieve pain and suffering and improve a person’s quality of life during an illness. And while it is often a major component of hospice care, it’s not limited to that. People can receive palliative care at any age or stage of an illness.

Why this is important

Many patients and even some doctors are unaware of the extent to which palliative care can be helpful to a patient. As a result, they may not ask for it when it’s needed.

A Dartmouth College study that included four counseling sessions with a nurse plus contact by phone found that a program of fairly simple palliative care for cancer patients helped to improve their mood and quality of life.

Another study at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston found that patients with metastatic lung cancer who received palliative care lived two-and-a-half months longer than those who received standard care. That may not seem like much, but for someone with advanced lung cancer, it’s a big difference.

The need-to-know basics

A recent Harvard Health Letter provided the following information about palliative care:

- The main priorities of any palliative care program are to identify and manage pain. Pain can be extremely debilitating and, if left untreated, can suppress the immune system and cause depression.
- Palliative care can also help relieve physical discomfort such as shortness of breath, fatigue, nausea, insomnia and constipation. Cancer patients often need help to control nausea, a common side effect of chemotherapy.
- Psychological and social services are part of palliative care, because a major illness is an emotional experience that can bring on depression, anxiety and other problems that patients and their families need to deal with. Some doctors say that, because palliative care specialists are separate from medical personnel, it may be easier for patients to open up to them and unburden themselves.
- Palliative care specialists can help patients and their families set realistic goals and make treatment choices. They may also advise on practical problems such as dealing with bureaucratic and financial difficulties that may arise.
- New cancer drugs are changing the nature of chemotherapy. They can have fewer side effects and some can even be taken at home in pill form. Thus, some doctors, patients and their families are more inclined to continue treatment close to the end of a person’s life and put off hospice care. If this is the case, there may be even more reason for palliative care to overlap with active treatment, instead of holding off and reserving it for hospice care.
- Palliative care programs in the U.S. are growing. About 70 percent of all hospitals with more than 200 beds now have some kind of palliative care program. And while cancer patients have traditionally been the focus, this is changing. A study presented at the annual meeting of the American College of Chest Physicians suggests that palliative care can also be helpful to patients with heart failure and advanced pulmonary disease.
- Nations about what someone with a terminal illness wants and is capable of doing may change if palliative care—with its emphasis on quality of life, social support and reducing suffering—is more widely applied. For example, you might assume that a person with a terminal illness no longer benefits from exercise. But studies have shown that physical activity slows down the decline in quality-of-life measures, even in patients with just a few months to live.

Key points to know about palliative care

Palliative care is not the same as hospice care and can be provided at any time during an illness. Ideally, palliative care addresses both physical and emotional needs of the patient and also supports the patient’s loved ones and caregivers. Palliative care specialists encourage patients and their families to ask questions, set goals and talk about their fears and doubts.

Palliative care does not depend on the course of a person’s illness, and patients do not need to give up their own doctor in order to receive palliative care. The process begins when a doctor refers you to the palliative care team.

Palliative care in a hospital is covered by Medicare, Medicaid and most insurance plans. You may need to do some research regarding payment options at home. For starters, go to:

www.getpalliativecare.org Search by state and city the Palliative Care Provider Directory of Hospitals.

www.ninanih.gov Search for “palliative care brochure” from the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute of Nursing Research.
Keeping the fun in sports as kids get older


Last month we talked about helping kids play well, have fun and get the most out of sports. This month we’ll look at how this applies to children at different ages.

For kids under 5

Parents may assume that a child’s reluctance to try new things will last forever. Dads especially worry that such behavior suggests a lack of courage and spunk in later years. These concerns are unfounded. To be sure, some kids are sensitive and shy—but don’t confuse this with a temporary emotional setback. If, after gentle coaxing over several days, a child clearly seems miserable swinging a bat or kicking a ball, then we, as parents, might wisely revisit the sport or activity at a later date.

Younger children may just need a little time to get used to something new. Be patient, supportive and encouraging.

For kids from 6 to 12

Competitive sports begin in earnest—and while some school-age kids are not athletic, parents still need to help them build comfort with their bodies and establish healthy exercise habits. Teaching children to enjoy using their bodies also creates a foundation for healthy exercise later in life.

A majority of kids participate in a sports league before age 13, but a great many drop out in their early teens. For many children, the sport just “isn’t fun anymore.”

Realistic expectations are key

Kids can get burned out by overscheduling, overspecialization and an overemphasis on winning. As parents (and coaches), we may expect a performance level that a child’s body and mind is simply not yet capable of producing.

We also make the mistake of seeing child development as a predictable series of uniform steps. For example, if a child shows athletic talent at 8, we may assume this will continue, given proper support. But some kids grow gradually while others seem to sprout overnight. Athletic skill can also grow and level off in unpredictable ways.

Parents who expect steady improvement can be disappointed when a child’s performance doesn’t hit the mark. This too makes kids feel like they failed. Unrealistic adult expectations pose a physical risk as well. Orthopedists warn that growing bones are vulnerable to repetitive-use injuries.

Specializing too soon

Focusing on one sport during the 6–12 age range may be tempting, because it can produce a boost in performance. But is this what you really want? Different experiences activate different areas of the developing brain of a child, and children are still discovering which activities suit them best.

As one dad said to another who was pushing his son to play soccer all year, “I like steak but we don’t eat it every night. Why limit my child to one sport? Years from now, maybe he’ll be golfing or playing lacrosse or a sport I know nothing about, like rugby.”

During these years, try to preserve a balance between organized sports and free, unstructured play. Kids need time for spontaneous creative play by themselves and with friends. It’s critical to their healthy emotional development.

For kids from 13 to 18

While teenagers’ brains and bodies are developing at a fast pace, they’re not finished growing until adulthood. Physical growth and mental maturity are unpredictable. Athletic talent in an adolescent doesn’t guarantee it as a young adult, and some kids are late bloomers. Keeping them engaged in sports with reasonable expectations is the best formula to promote healthy development.

Quitting a sport isn’t necessarily a “cop-out.” It may just mean that a teen is coming to terms with her or his strengths and weaknesses or has not found the right sport yet. Explore how kids feel before you assume they’re being lazy or acting on an unhealthy impulse.

Very few kids win sports scholarships to play on Division I teams in college. Pressure to achieve this goal can have a negative impact on a teen’s athletic performance. Remember, adolescents—in fact, children of all ages—play their best when they enjoy the sport, feel relaxed and feel supported by their parents.

—Adapted from the authors’ book “Whose Game Is It, Anyway?” (Houghton Mifflin).
Say what you must…but tactfully

Do you remember the last time you felt like giving someone “a piece of your mind,” but you didn’t want to get into trouble at work with your supervisors or make matters worse with your coworkers? We all have moments when we feel like we really have to say something—but we need to do so very carefully.

Communications expert Don Gabor, in his book How to Start a Conversation and Make Friends, has a lot of good ideas to help you express yourself with T-A-C-T in potentially awkward situations.

T = Think before you speak

Before responding to a criticism, challenge or blunt remark, take a deep breath. It will help you relax, think more clearly and avoid a knee-jerk response. A moment of silence is also a tactful strategy that is neither a confirmation nor a denial of what was said. It gives you a few extra seconds to consider how to respond and what you would like to say.

A = Actively listen

Ask a few polite questions to clarify the other person’s words, state of mind or motive. Listening closely for facts, feelings and implied meanings will give you more information and time to focus your response on where it will do the most good—that is, getting the outcome you desire.

Active listening also gives the other person an opportunity to clarify or reconsider his or her comments. To show that you paid attention, paraphrase what was said. For example: “Let me make sure I understand what you’re saying. Do you mean that...?”

C = Consider the outcome

Before you say anything, give some thought to what you would like to happen as a result of your remarks. What do you want the other person to do? Back off and give you more space? Explain what she expects from you? Handle the problem on his own? Give you more help with a task?

Whatever it is, the simple act of considering the outcome is a powerful motivator to choosing the best words and actions to achieve that result.

T = Tread lightly

It may be the time to speak up, but coming on too strong will often backfire. Balance your desire to make an assertive response with the needs of the other person. For example, to raise an issue gently, you might say: “I’d like to ask you for a favor that would mean a lot to me. Would you please...?” Or “Could we take a few minutes to talk about what happened during the meeting?”

Getting the desired results

Here are a few examples of common problematic conversations and Gabor’s suggested responses for a desired outcome.

A COWORKER IS TAKING ADVANTAGE of your good nature and trying to get you to do some of his or her work.

Desired outcome: The person will start to pull his or her own weight.

Tactful response: “I need extra help, maybe you should let our supervisor know. I really can’t do your work and mine too.”

SOMEONE AGGRESSIVELY CHALLENGES YOUR OPINION.

Desired outcome: You want to avoid a confrontation or escalation into a major argument.

Tactful response: “We obviously see the situation differently. Let’s agree to disagree.” If he or she continues to challenge you, calmly state, “Please let’s agree to disagree and leave it at that.”

YOU SAY SOMETHING THAT UPSETS OR OFFENDS SOMEONE.

Desired outcome: Getting past your comment, changing the topic and not saying anything to make the matter worse.

Tactful response: Quickly and sincerely apologize: “Oh, I’m so sorry I said that! I don’t know what I was thinking. Please forgive me.”

How to correct these common mistakes online

More and more of us, as well as our employers, are using social networking to reach out online to old and new friends and potential customers. There are rules of etiquette for these conversations too, wherever they take place—at work or at home. Here are four common online errors to avoid:

Mistake 1. Relentlessly emailing your social networking contacts with pitches for your products or services.

Correction. Only send information, articles and links that you are sure your contacts will find useful.

Mistake 2. Posting sloppily written comments.

Correction. You can’t erase or eliminate comments you’ve sent into cyberspace. Check your information and consider your wording before you click “Send.” If you are talking to customers, make sure you provide correct dates, names and addresses.

Mistake 3. Ignoring or not answering messages from old (or new) contacts.

Correction. Say, “I’m sorry it took me so long to get back to you,” and don’t let tardiness become a habit. Let people know that they will hear from you within a certain length of time—and follow through as you promised.

Mistake 4. Turning a difference of opinion into a war of words.

Correction. Don’t be swayed by the crude way people talk to each other on reality TV. It has no place on the job. Offer a dissenting view without negating another person’s opinion. You can say, “I respect your views but I see the situation (problem, solution, etc.) differently.”

“Could we take a few minutes and talk about it?”
Walnuts move to top slot as ‘perfect’ food

Mother Nature’s most nearly perfect packaged foods are tree and ground nuts—and a new study reported at a meeting of the American Chemical Society positions walnuts in the No. 1 slot among commonly eaten nuts.

Walnuts contain almost twice as much disease-fighting antioxidants as an equivalent amount of almonds, peanuts, cashews, macadamias, pecans and pistachios.

The antioxidants in walnuts are also of particularly high quality, says Joe Vinson, Ph.D., of the University of Scranton, who conducted the chemical analysis.

Nuts account for less than 8% of the daily antioxidants in the average American’s diet. Why so little?

For one reason, many people are unaware that nuts are so healthful and nutritious, says Dr. Vinson. And some people are concerned about gaining weight from a food that is high in calories and fat, which nuts are.

But you only need to eat about seven walnuts a day to get the health benefits, and the fat in nuts is the good kind, not artery-clogging saturated fat.

To get the full effect of walnuts’ potency, Dr. Vinson suggests eating them raw or unroasted, because heat tends to reduce the quality of the antioxidants in nuts.

In addition to antioxidants, nuts contain protein, a meat substitute. They are rich in vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber. Plus, they’re dairy and gluten-free. ♦

Why sunshine is good for kids’ eyesight

The sun, it seems, is a remarkably good eye doctor. Researchers have found that kids who spent more time outside were much less likely to develop nearsightedness than children who spent more time indoors.

Here are some of the findings:

- **An Ohio State University study** reported that, among American children with two nearsighted parents, those who spent at least two hours a day outdoors were four times less likely to be nearsighted than those who spent less than one hour per day outside.

- **A study comparing the eyesight of Chinese children in Singapore and Chinese children in Australia** found that the Singapore kids were almost nine times more likely to be nearsighted than those in Australia. The only major difference between the two groups was that the children in Australia spent about 14 hours a week outdoors, compared with the kids in Singapore who spent only about three hours a week outdoors. The study was reported in the Archives of Ophthalmology.

Nearsightedness, also called myopia, often develops between ages 6 and 8 and tends to worsen as children get older. The trait is often inherited, but that doesn’t explain why it has become so much more common in the modern world. In the 1970s, 25 percent of Americans were nearsighted. Now the rate has risen to 42 percent and similar increases have occurred around the world.

Nearsighted people have trouble seeing objects clearly at a distance. The problem is that light rays are hitting in front of, rather than directly on, the retina, which is the light-sensitive part of the eye.

It’s not possible to prevent all nearsightedness, but these new studies suggest that we can minimize its effect—even among kids who have inherited the trait. Here are some suggestions:

- **Have your child’s eyesight examined early**, especially if there’s a family history of nearsightedness or other eye conditions.

- **If you notice that your child has trouble reading or watching TV from a normal distance**, have his or her eyes examined.

- **Encourage more time outside**. Researchers have found that bright outdoor light helps children’s developing eyes maintain the correct distance between the lens and the retina. Dim indoor lighting, especially the time spent watching TV or focusing on a small screen, does not.

Exercise can help soothe aching knees

When the cartilage that protects your knee bones starts to wear away, the condition is called osteoarthritis (OA) and millions of Americans suffer from it. The symptoms may range from stiffness to mild pain to chronic pain that doesn’t stop even when you’re resting.

Talk to your doctor about OA symptoms, and be aware also of non-drug treatments that can help relieve pain. Clinician Anna Ribaudo of the Weill Cornell Hospital for Special Surgery in New York suggests the following treatments:

**ICE OR HEAT**. If your knees feel sore or swollen, use ice. If they feel stiff, apply heat.

Apply whichever is appropriate for 15-20 minutes at a time, up to several times a day—but no more than once an hour.

**KNEE BRACE**. Wear it only during activities that cause discomfort such as climbing stairs, walking for long periods or dancing. Do not wear a brace when you are resting or doing other non-stress activities. Overuse of a brace can weaken muscles.

**MASSAGE**. This can help relieve muscle tension, boost circulation, ease stiffness and promote cartilage repair. You don’t need a professional massage. Simply rub the muscles around the knee—but not the kneecap.

**EXERCISE**. Don’t be afraid to move: the more movement, the better. Try range of motion and strengthening exercises. Aerobic activities like walking, swimming or bicycling can help too. Just avoid high-impact step classes, jumping or rowing machines, deep squats or lunges.

**WEIGHT LOSS**. Maintaining a healthy weight can be very important because research has shown that overweight women have about four times the risk of knee problems. ♦

—Adapted from Weill Cornell Medical College’s Women’s Nutrition Connection newsletter

WFL September 2011 ♦ www.workandfamilylife.com
A how-to guide to a stronger love relationship

In today’s world, unique traps can derail even the best relationships. We are overloaded with ever-growing lists of things to do, superficial electronic connections and interrupted moments. What can we do to restore and repair the disconnection created by our overstretched lives?

Luckily, Dr. Edward M. Hallowell (whom many of us know from his books Crazy Busy, Driven to Distraction and The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness) has teamed up with his wife, Sue George Hallowell, a couples therapist—and they’ve written a wise, wonderful new book titled Married to Distraction.

It’s filled with practical advice, scripts, tips and communication and interaction techniques drawn from real-life stories. The Hallowells offer straightforward advice on how to avoid destructive roadblocks that affect many couples. They describe ways to rid yourself of toxic worry and to identify the cause of ongoing conflict. They also suggest an approach to help you listen, explore and understand—without being judgmental.

Beyond providing a great deal of helpful advice, what makes this book so special are the beautifully expressed descriptions of what a healthy, loving relationship can be (see Front Page story).

“When a couple is in a good place,” the authors say, “each partner feels secure and fulfilled.” And to achieve this in a relationship, both partners need to feel that the other person (a) thinks highly of them, (b) cares deeply for them and (c) sees them as proficient at something.

“Beyond that, for love to become what we all want it to become,” the Hallowells write, “a smile should cross your face when you think of your mate. You ought to think of him or her as someone you have fun with, someone you look forward to seeing, someone who for an undefinable reason makes your life feel special...someone who makes you feel good, no matter what else might be going on.”

Married to Distraction: Restoring Intimacy and Strengthening Your Marriage in an Age of Interruption ($25, hard cover) (Ballantine Books) is available in bookstores and online.

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